

# EYE ON ETHICS

NEWSLETTER OF THE MIAMI-DADE COMMISSION ON ETHICS & PUBLIC TRUST



## Issue 20 - Eye on Ethics Newsletter



### Commission on Ethics & Public Trust by the Numbers:

*COE lawyers provided approximately 160 ethics opinions during the past fiscal year to County and municipal elected officials, board members, employees, and persons that transact with local government including lobbyists and vendors.*

## Director's Message



Dear Friends & Colleagues,

As we continue through the summer months, the Ethics Commission is joining other state and local government agencies and finalizing its return to full in-person operations. Going forward, the Ethics Commission will be conducting in-person meetings each month and all the Commission staff will be back in the office in August. This will mark the first time since

September 2020 when the Ethics Commission moved into its offices in Overtown Transit Village that we will be operational and fully staffed in-person.

### Quick Links

**24 Hour**  
Complaint  
Hotline  
786-314-9560



Visit Us

### Commissioners

Nelson C. Bellido Esq.,  
Chair

Ethics Training for County Board members is returning to regularly scheduled in-person meetings at the Ethics Commission offices and our outreach staffers will also be fanning out to provide live training in our cities. In the coming months, our Investigators will once again be in attendance at municipal council/commission meetings throughout the County.

This last month, the Ethics Commission selected Staff Attorney Radia Turay as only the second Ethics Commission Advocate in the agency's two-decade history. Ms. Turay was selected after the Ethics Commission engaged in a competitive selection process that included live meeting interviews of half a dozen finalist candidates. While recognizing Ms. Turay for her accomplishments, members of the Ethics Commission also lauded the qualifications of all the finalists and thanked them for their interest in the position. More on Commission Advocate Turay in our note below.

Watch for notices on Commission staff participation in ethics training for government procurement professionals at the national level, with our participation in the NIGP: The Institute for Public Procurement's upcoming annual conference in Anaheim beginning on August 28.

Finally, with the rest of the nation, we mourn the loss of life in Surfside and take a moment to recognize the efforts of our local government brethren in response to the terrible tragedy.

That is my report for now. Thank you for your continued support of the Ethics Commission.

Best regards,  
Jose Arrojo

Dr. Judith Bernier,  
Vice Chair  
Judge Lawrence A.  
Schwartz  
Charlton Copeland, Esq.  
Wifredo Gort

**Executive Director**  
Jose J. Arrojo, Esq.

**General Counsel**  
Martha Perez, Esq.

**Advocate**  
Radia Turay Esq.



**FAQ**



*SUPPORT THOSE AFFECTED BY THE  
DEVASTATING BUILDING COLLAPSE IN SURFSIDE*

**DONATE  
NOW**

**Let's Help Stop the Spread of Coronavirus**

GET VACCINATED

WE CAN  
*Adapt.*  
WE WILL  
*Thrive.*

#WeCanWeWill



Important Memo to Elected Officials & Employees





## MIAMI-DADE COMMISSION ON ETHICS AND PUBLIC TRUST


Overtown Transit Village North  
701 Northwest 1<sup>st</sup> Court · 8<sup>th</sup> Floor · Miami, Florida 33136  
Phone: (305) 579-2594 · Facsimile: (305) 579-0273  
Website: [ethics.miamidade.gov](http://ethics.miamidade.gov)

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### MEMORANDUM

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**TO:** All County and Municipal Elected Officials and Employees

**FROM:** Jose J. Arrojo, Executive Director  
Miami-Dade Commission on Ethics and Public Trust 

**RE:** Limitations on Political Activities of County and Municipal Officers and Employees

**DATE:** July 9, 2021

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As we approach fall and winter election dates in a number of our cities, together with our partner agencies, this annual reminder serves the purpose of underscoring limitations on the political activities of all county and municipal officers and employees during the current and upcoming election season. **There is a new reminder contained in this memorandum.**

The following limitations are imposed by Florida Statute, Sections 104.31 and 106.15, by the Miami-Dade County Conflict of Interest and Code of Ethics Ordinance at Section 2-11.1 of the Code of Miami-Dade County, and other state laws, local ordinances and previously issued administrative orders:

- While all local officials and employees have a right to engage in political campaign activities, they must not use their official authority to influence another person's vote or to affect the outcome of an election.
- County and municipal staff wishing to be involved in political campaigns should limit such activity to off-duty hours.
- **Paid political campaign work constitutes outside employment for county and municipal employees and must be reported to the supervisor of elections for county employees and to the municipal clerk for city employees.**
- Political campaign activities may not involve the use of public resources in support of any political campaign or candidate, including office stationery, telephones, computers, or vehicles. Taxpayers' monies must be used exclusively for public purposes.
- No public official or employee may coerce anyone to support any candidate or to contribute to a political campaign.

*To continue reading the Limitations on Political Activities of County and Municipal Officers memo click [here](#).*

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## COE Back Educating the Community In-Person

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Consistent with a return to normalcy after over a year and half of pandemic-imposed restrictions, the Ethics Commission recently partnered with our hosts in the City of North Miami, the Miami-Dade County Municipal Clerks Association, Miami-Dade County League of Cities, and the Weiss Serota law firm, to offer local campaign financing reporting "Best Practices" training for municipal clerks. It was good to see municipal clerks from some of our Broward cities in attendance. Special thanks go to the Honorable Vanessa Joseph, Elected Clerk for North Miami, and the Honorable Joe Corradino, Mayor of Pinecrest and President of the League of Cities, for their participation and support of the training.

## New Commission Advocate Selected



The Miami-Dade Commission on Ethics and Public Trust (COE) voted unanimously to select Radia Turay as the new COE Advocate, replacing Michael Murawski who recently accepted the position as Executive Director of the Naples Ethics Commission.

Ms. Turay has served as a Staff Attorney at the COE since 2016 and has years of experience as a civil litigator and criminal prosecutor. She practiced in a private firm and worked for close to five years at the Miami-Dade State Attorney's Office where she held several positions including Division Chief.

"I am very grateful that the Commission has granted me this opportunity," said Ms. Turay. "As the Commission Advocate, I will bring passion for fairness and justice garnered through my unique background and I will work tirelessly to continue to bolster public trust in the administration of our government."

The Commission was unanimous in its praise of all the finalists, the breadth and significance of their professional experiences, and the quality of their presentations.



Congratulations to Joshua Heath, who served with the COE as a Legal Intern until May of this year, for receiving the University of St. Thomas School of Law CALI Award for his Civil Practice Externship with the COE . The COE is not only proud of Josh for receiving this recognition but is also proud to know that Josh is now working with an Insurance defense firm. Great news Josh!

## June Ethics - Commission Meeting Actions



### Summary of the Miami-Dade County Commission on Ethics & Public Trust Meeting Held on June 9, 2021

The Miami-Dade County Commission on Ethics and Public Trust held a Commission Meeting on June 9, 2021. The following actions took place:

**RQO 21-02** was issued to Laura Morilla, Board Liaison to the Interfaith Advisory Board, concluding that the board's members are not required to file financial statements until such time as the board attains half of its full membership.

#### Letter of Instruction Ratified and Fines Imposed in Case Involving Former Miami Beach City Commissioner

**C 18-17-04:** The Ethics Commission ratified a Letter of Instruction and issued a \$1,000 in investigative costs to former Miami Beach City Commissioner Michael Grieco. The COE previously found that that Mr. Grieco violated the Home Rule Charter's Citizens' Bill of Rights relating to Truth in Government.

#### Final Order Entered and Fine Imposed in Case Involving Former Opa-Locka Mayor and Commissioner

**C 19-05-02:** A Final Order was entered and a \$1,000 fine was imposed in a case involving former



Opa-Locka Mayor and Commissioner John Riley. \$1,000 in investigative costs were also ordered. The COE previously found Mr. Riley to be in violation of the Financial Disclosure and Conflicting Employment sections of the Miami-Dade County Ethics Code. A Defense Motion for Reconsideration was denied.

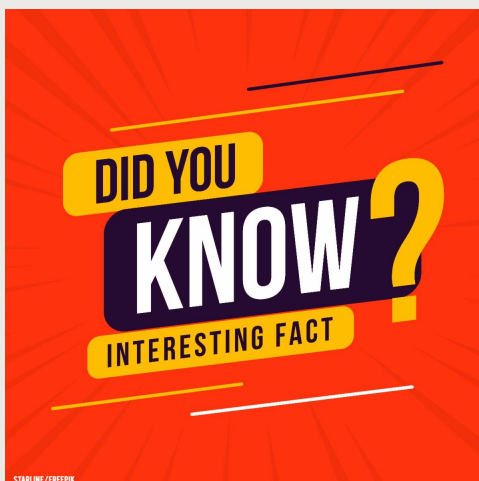
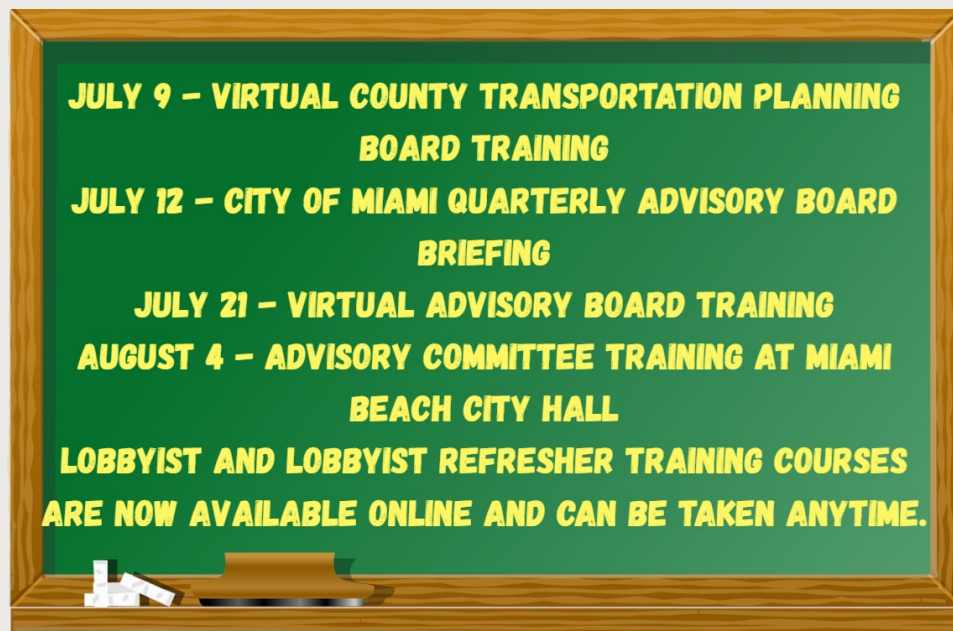
#### **Letter of Reprimand Ratified and Fine Imposed in Case Involving Town of Medley Councilwoman**

C 21-09-04: The Ethics Commission ratified a Letter of Reprimand and imposed a \$500 fine to Town of Medley Councilwoman Lily Stefano. Councilwoman Stefano previously stipulated to a finding of Probable Cause for violating the Exploitation of Official Position section of the Miami-Dade County Ethics Code.

#### **No Probable Cause Found in Case Involving Attorneys Miguel Diaz de La Portilla and Laura Russo**

C 21-18-04: The Ethics Commission found No Probable Cause in a complaint that attorneys Miguel Diaz de la Portilla and Laura Russo violated the Lobbying section of the County and City Ethics Code. The complaint, filed by the Gables Accountability Project organization, alleged that Mr. Diaz de la Portilla and Ms. Russo lobbied the City of Coral Gables on a tree removal/ mitigation issue without registering.

## **Educating the Community / Upcoming Events**



*Currently, the primary and almost exclusive funding source for the Commission is Miami-Dade County. The Ethics Commission may accept grants, contributions or appropriations from the federal government, state government, any municipality within Miami-Dade County, or any academic institution or nonprofit entity which has not entered into a contract or transacted business with the County.*

Miami-Dade County Commission on  
Ethics & Public Trust  
Phone: 305-579-2594  
Email: [ethics@miamidade.gov](mailto:ethics@miamidade.gov)  
Website: [www.ethics.miamidade.gov](http://www.ethics.miamidade.gov)

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